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which, instead of being a synonym of *Uromys*, should take the former's place at 52.

One change which I myself pointed out in 1895, but forgot in 1896, has escaped the lynx eyes of Mr. Palmer, namely, that *Pygeretmus Gloger** (1841) antedates and supersedes *Platycercomys* Brandt (1844), No. 117 of the list.

In what has been called the real part of the paper, I doubt if Mr. Palmer's criticisms on the suppression of the *Lophiomyidæ* and the separation of the *Spalacidæ* and *Bathyergidæ* would have been made had he ever compared the teeth—practically identical—of *Lophiomyis* and *Cricetus cricetus*, or realized to what an extent similar fossorial habits may mask real differences by a superficial resemblance, so that the two families referred to, really incomparably more different in essentials than the American *Geomysidæ* and *Heteromyidæ*, have yet become so alike externally that zoologists of an earlier generation naturally thought them to be nearly allied.

But on these and other points further criticism is much to be desired, and I can only repeat how fortunate it is that my mistakes and omissions in the nomenclatural part of the paper should have had the advantage of revision by such an authority on the subject as Mr. Palmer.

OLDFIELD THOMAS.

MARRIAGE BY CAPTURE IN ARABIA.

Antar is a Bedouin romance reputed to have been written by Asmai, one of the learned men of the court of Haroun-al-Raschid, shortly before the beginning of the ninth century.† From the translation by Terrick Hamilton (London, 8vo., 1820), Vol. IV., pp. 388-9, the following description of an early Arabian marriage custom is quoted. The custom is a well known one. Asmai's explanation of it is new to me.

"Now, there was a certain curious custom current among the Arabs at that period. The night on which a bridegroom should wed his wife they brought a quantity of camel pack-saddles and heaped them one upon another, decorating them with magnificent garments. Here they conducted the bride, and having

* *Naturgesch.*, p. 106.

† It is, in fact, a compilation of the XIIth century.

seated her on high, they said to the bridegroom, "Come on, now, for thy bride!" And the bridegroom rushed forward to carry her off, whilst the youths of the tribe, drawn up in line, right and left, with staves and stones in their hands, as soon as the bridegroom rushed forward, began beating and pelting him and doing their utmost to prevent his reaching his wife. If a rib or so were broken in the affair it was well for him; if he were killed it was his destiny.

"But should he reach his wife in safety, the people quitted him and no one attempted to approach him. ('I inquired about this circumstance,' says Asmai, 'and what it was they were about.' 'Asmai,' they answered, 'the meaning of this is to exhibit the bride to the warriors, that should her husband die, anyone else might take a fancy to her and take her off.')

So far as my reading goes, the explanation of marriage by simulated capture, which is given in the last sentence, is entirely novel.

EDWARD S. HOLDEN.

LICK OBSERVATORY,

August 15, 1897.

SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE.

The Foundations of Geometry. By B. A. W. RUSSELL. Cambridge: The University Press. 1897. Pp. xvi + 201.

Here is a book especially opportune, on a subject of transcendent interest. The author's mathematical equipment is refreshingly sound, and his metaphysical results are delightfully suggestive, even where the mathematician may feel constrained to return as verdict 'not proven.' So much the more to be regretted is it that the Chapter I., 'A Short History of Metageometry,' should open with a glaring error, as follows: "The liquefaction of Euclidean orthodoxy is the axiom of parallels, and it was by the refusal to admit this axiom without proof that Metageometry began. The first effort in this direction, that of Legendre, was inspired by the hope of deducing this axiom from the others."

Mr. Russell cites Halsted's Bibliography of Hyper-Space and Non-Euclidean Geometry (1878), but can evidently never have seen it, since its first page speaks of 'The enormous